

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Overview Information

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Funding Opportunity Title: Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP) for Continued Development & Maintenance of the Compliance Assistance Center Platform

Announcement Type: Initial announcement

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.305 - Compliance Assistance Support for Services to the Regulated Community and other Assistance Providers.

Dates: May X, 2004 deadline for all initial proposals to be submitted. All dates are by midnight, Eastern Standard Time.

Overview: EPA seeks to partner with an eligible recipient meeting certain legal and programmatic criteria to continue the development and maintenance of the Compliance Assistance Center Platform (Center Platform). This request for an initial proposal (RFIP) solicits applications from non-profit organizations and from universities. In the second step, or Request for Final Proposal (RFP), EPA will invite all applicants whose initial proposals met the threshold criteria to submit a more detailed proposal for the operation and maintenance of the Center Platform. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose detailed proposal is ranked highest by EPA.

Full Text

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Background

In partnership with industry, academic institutions, environmental groups, and other agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) supports thirteen Compliance Assistance Centers (Centers) to help small- and medium-size businesses and local governments better understand and comply with environmental regulations. These Centers provide easy to understand compliance information targeted to specific sectors, geographic and environmental topics: agriculture; automotive service and repair; automotive recycling; chemical manufacturers; construction; federal facilities; local governments, metal finishing; paints and coatings; printed wiring board manufacturers; printers; transportation; and the US / Mexican border environmental issues. All Centers can be accessed at <www.assistancecenters.net>.

To support new Center development, EPA has funded the National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (NCMS) to develop, operate and maintain the Compliance Assistance Center Platform (Platform) from which new Centers can be “launched.” The Platform includes a suite of comprehensive web-based tools necessary to create a full-featured Center. States, industry, and compliance assistance providers can work with NCMS to establish Centers that will help the regulated community better understand and more efficiently comply with environmental requirements.

The ultimate goal of the Center Platform is to help industry, tribes and government sectors comply with environmental regulations. The Center Platform is partnering with a broad range of trade and professional organizations and government agencies to create compliance assistance resources for a variety of sectors. To date, three Centers have been created and launched via Center Platform resources: Border Center (www.bordercenter.org); Environmental Compliance for Automotive Recyclers (www.ecarcenter.org); and the Construction Industry Compliance Assistance Center (www.cicacenter.org). In developing new Centers, the Center Platform must work intensively with its partners to identify specific customer needs, customize tools, and workout the distribution of responsibilities.

In addition to specific Center development, the Center Platform has developed tools and resources that are available to other Centers and assistance providers. Most notably, the Center Platform has created and maintains a suite of state-specific resource locators (www.envcap.org/statetools.htm). The state resource locators are offered for a wide range of topics to help find important environmental compliance information specific to individual states. The continued operation of the Center Platform will include the maintenance of existing state resource locators and development of additional of new state resource locators and other tools to help the regulated community to better understand and comply with applicable state environmental regulations. Visit www.envcap.org to learn more about the Center Platform. Generally, the existing Centers use Cold Fusion and use a minimum amount of broad band demand to promote quick loading. The Centers have been tested for use on IE as well as Netscape. This information is provided for informational purposes only. Applicants can propose alternative approaches to carrying out the objectives of the Center Platform.

II. Award Information

This award may be funded up to \$1,330,000 over a 5-year period. EPA will partially fund each budget period and will consider funding the balance of budget requests contingent upon satisfactory progress as certified by the EPA Project Officer, the availability of funds, and EPA priorities.

III. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be a nonprofit organization as that term is defined in Section 4(6) of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law 96-107, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. Colleges, universities, and community colleges are eligible to apply. However, nonprofit organizations as described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. In addition, for profit organizations are not eligible to apply. Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs is not applicable to this request for an initial proposal.

Cost Sharing or Matching

Although EPA does not require cost sharing or matching funds, the grant applicants will be encouraged to provide information regarding resources (cash/in-kind services) that they would commit to manage the Center Platform.

Other Eligibility Criteria

Eligible and interested parties must meet **all** of the following threshold criteria:

- Applicant can demonstrate that it has a financial management and time management system in place that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular (A-21 for Universities and A-122 for non profit organizations).
- Applicant can demonstrate that it has an indirect cost rate that has been approved by a federal agency or has a cost allocation system that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular.
- Applicant can demonstrate a previous working relationship(s) with experts and national organizations devoted to assisting the regulated community comply with environmental regulations, or intends to partner with an organization with such expertise.
- Applicant can demonstrate an understanding of the environmental needs of the regulated community through past activities, or intends to partner with an organization with such expertise.
- Applicant and/or partnering organization can demonstrate familiarity with applicable federal, state and local environmental regulations and experience in developing tools (e.g., training, plain-language guides, fact-sheets, Agency contact locators, etc) to improve the audiences' understanding of their regulatory obligations.
- Applicant has the hardware and web-based expertise, or intends to partner with an organization with such expertise, to manage the Center Platform.
- Applicant can demonstrate previous experience, or intends to partner with an organization with experience, in developing and maintaining web-based services.

Applicants must provide relevant information (e.g., hard ware and web-based experience,

previous working relationship with organizations devoted to environmental compliance assistance, understanding of the regulated community's environmental needs) for any organizations with which they will partner in supporting the Center Platform.

IV. Initial Proposal and Submission Information

Address to Request Application Package

There is no standard governmental form for interested parties to use when submitting their initial proposal.

Content and Form of Application Submission

The prospective grantee must include the following general information.

- Name of Organization
- Description of Organization (associated members, if any, purpose/function of the organization)
- Address, City, State and Zip
- Telephone and Facsimile Number
- Responsible Official with email address

Eligible and interested parties are invited to provide EPA with verifiable documentation indicating how their organization meets all of the threshold criteria. Applicants must provide relevant information (e.g., hard ware and web-based experience, previous working relationship with organizations devoted to environmental compliance assistance, understanding of the regulated community's environmental needs) for any organizations with which they will partner in supporting the Center Platform. Information submitted to address the seven threshold criteria should not exceed ten (10) total pages.

Applicants must clearly mark any data that the applicant considers being Confidential Business Information (CBI). If necessary, EPA will make final confidential business information determinations under 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B.

Submission Dates and Times

An initial proposal responding to the seven threshold criteria should be no greater than ten (10) pages in length, and must be delivered in hard copy and electronically to EPA by 5:00 P.M., May 7, 2004. Late applications will not be reviewed nor considered.

Intergovernmental Review:

Not applicable

Funding Restrictions

Not applicable

Other Submission Requirements

Not applicable

V. Proposal Review Information

Review/Selection Criteria: An EPA evaluation panel will review the initial proposals on a “pass/fail” basis and make recommendations to senior management in the Office of Compliance. Applicants must meet the eligibility of **all** seven threshold criteria to be invited to submit a more detailed final proposal. The EPA will notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

All successful applicants that met the threshold criteria will be invited to submit a more detailed final proposal for the maintenance and operation of the Center Platform. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose final proposal best meets the criteria as set out in the Request for Final Proposal. The Request for Final Proposal package is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>.

Anticipated Announcement Dates:

The EPA expects to notify all applicants of their eligibility to continue onto the final proposal by May X, 2004. Any disputes that arise during the selection process will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR 330.63 and Part 31, subpart F. (See web-site at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html>.)

VI. Award Administration Information**Award Notice**

After the deadline for the initial proposals has passed, EPA will acknowledge receipt of proposals by postal mail. Applicants that meet all threshold criteria will be invited to submit a full project proposal in accordance with the Request for Proposals posted at <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>. Once final project proposals are reviewed and evaluated and ranked, a final selection will be made. The successful applicant will complete and submit an application for federal assistance. All other applicants will be notified within 30 days after award. The notification will be made electronically or via postal service depending on how the application was submitted to EPA.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All applicants must complete an application for federal assistance, available at

<http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/contents.htm>, prior to award (see 40 CFR 30.12 and 31.10). In addition, the successful applicant will be required to certify that they have not been Debarred or Suspended from participation in federal assistance awards in accordance with 40 CFR 32.

Reporting:

Quarterly project status reports (quarterly reports), a final project report, and final Financial Status Report will be required. Quarterly reports shall cover work status, work progress,

difficulties encountered, preliminary data results and a statement of activity anticipated during the subsequent reporting period, including a description of equipment, techniques, and materials to be used or evaluated. A discussion of expenditures along with a comparison of the percentage of the project completed to the project schedule and an explanation of significant discrepancies shall be included in the quarterly reports. The quarterly reports shall also include any changes of key personnel concerned with the project.

VII. Agency Contact

Tracy Back, Team Leader, Compliance Assistance Centers
US, EPA (mail code 2224A)
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20460
E-mail: back.tracy@epa.gov. Telephone: 202-564-7076
Fax: 202-564-0009